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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAMAKO 001361

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SUBJECT: CALCULATIONS SHIFT AS FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE  
ENTERS PRESIDENTIAL RACE

REF: A. BAMAKO 01005

1B. BAMAKO 01154

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: On November 25 the Alliance for Democracy in Mali's (ADEMA) vice-president and former Minister of Defense, Soumeylou Boubey Maiga, defied his party's leadership and declared himself "ready" to challenge President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) for the presidency, albeit stopping short of officially launching his candidacy. ADEMA has already endorsed the re-election bid of ATT. Maiga's speech before a rally of more than a thousand would-be supporters changed the dynamics of what had been a two-man race between ATT and National Assembly president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK). Maiga is well-known in Mali but lacks the stature of IBK or ATT. Recent conversations with Maiga and others suggest he is aiming not for first place in the April 2007 elections but third and the power to influence the results of a second round run-off between IBK and ATT. Maiga, however, may have paved the way for other potential presidential candidates. Following his announcement, the Union for Republic and Democracy (URD) - which is lead by Soumaila Cisse, who lost to ATT in the second round of the 2002 presidential election - appeared poised to re-visit its decision to join with ADEMA in support of ATT. End Summary.

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Mali's Largest Party Splits Over Support for ATT  
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2.(C) On November 25 former Minister of Defense and ADEMA vice-president, Soumeylou Boubey Maiga, told over a thousand supporters that he was "ready" to run for president in 2007. Maiga stopped short of officially launching his presidential campaign - neither ATT nor IBK have officially announced either - but he left no doubt of his intention to respond positively to the "demands" of his supporters. The meticulously scripted rally appeared to have been patterned after a U.S. presidential convention, complete with character "testimonies" from influential supporters and a biographical film projected on to giant television screens rented for the occasion. Unable to run under the banner of his party - which has already endorsed ATT's bid for re-election - Maiga created a new political grouping, "Convergence 2007." Maiga intends to retain his role as ADEMA's vice president, but will be unable to use the USD 618,000 in public campaign finance funds recently allotted to ADEMA by the GOM (septel). Maiga told the Embassy he was banking on support from abroad to finance the CFA 10 million (approximately USD 20,000) fee for presidential candidates and pay campaign expenses. Other Embassy contacts indicate that Libya may be one of Maiga's potential financial supporters. When asked, Maiga himself only went so far as to say Libya was among many potential financial supporters.

3.(C) Maiga's announcement threw ADEMA into disarray. ADEMA's president, Diouncouna Traore, has been working with ATT and the URD since September on a "campaign platform" designed to catapult ATT to victory in 2007. According to reports, ATT promised ADEMA and the URD several Ministerial posts in return for their support (ref A). Worried that a renegade presidential candidacy from within ADEMA's ranks could jeopardize this agreement, Traore sought to dissuade party members from attending Maiga's rally, even releasing a letter instructing the party faithful "to remain vigilant and avoid embarking on an adventure that has no future."

4.(C) ADEMA is no stranger to internal division. Mali's other two major political groupings, the RPM and URD, were both founded by dissident ADEMA members during the 2002 presidential campaign. Maiga has repeatedly told the Embassy that by running for president, he hopes to reinvigorate a party that has lost its way under the leadership of Diouncouna Traore.

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Political Re-Calculations  
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5.(C) Maiga's decision forced Mali's other main parties, the RPM and URD, to make some rapid political re-calculations. Although few in Bamako (including Maiga himself) believe Maiga is likely to win the presidency, his candidacy increases the likelihood of a second round run-off. The URD may have telegraphed its interpretation of events by canceling the unveiling of the joint ADEMA-URD platform, drafted in conjunction with ATT, that was scheduled for November 26. URD leaders claimed the November 26 meeting was postponed in order to give party members a chance to vote on

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the proposed text of the draft platform during the URD's national convention scheduled for early December. It remained unclear why the URD decided to change course and submit the platform to its national convention at the last moment. Some speculated that Maiga's entry into the race may have led URD leader Soumaila Cisse to re-visit his decision to position himself for a subsequent presidential run in 2012 by backing ATT in 2007.

6.(C) RPM secretary general Bocar Treta described Maiga's presidential run, and the chaos it has caused within ADEMA, as "an excellent thing" for the RPM. Treta said the RPM expected its candidate, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, to pick up a number of disgruntled ADEMA supporters. The RPM, said Treta, is in the process of rallying discontented sections of Malian society. This includes members of ADEMA and the URD who are unhappy with the direction of the country under ATT but wary about wasting their vote on a long-shot candidate like Maiga.

Treta also confirmed reports that the RPM was courting Mali's so-called "seven billionaires." This group of businessmen, who constitute some of ATT's most important financial backers, apparently fell out with ATT in October following the controversial election of a new Chamber of Commerce president in Bamako (septel). Treta said the RPM's approach toward the seven billionaires was further strengthened during ATT's recent trip to China. According to Treta, ATT asked the re-elected Chamber of Commerce president, Jamille Bittar, to provide a list of key Malian businessmen with contacts in China who could accompany ATT to the recent summit of African leaders. Due to the continuing turmoil within the Chamber of Commerce, Bittar was unable to provide a list. As a result, no Malian business leaders traveled with ATT. The business community, said Treta, therefore lost business opportunities, and consequently confidence, in ATT.

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RPM Loses a Minister, Refuses to Recognize CENI  
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7.(C) On November 17 the Minister of Health, Zenaib Mint Youba Maiga, formally resigned from the RPM. This left the RPM with only the Ministry of Environment in ATT's government. Youba Maiga had long since stopped attending party meetings and her resignation announcement elicited cheering at an assembly of RPM members. Treta said the resignation of "that woman" showed that "ATT is with his Ministers while the RPM is with the people." Treta said the RPM will decide in January whether it is in the party's interest for the Minister of Environment, who remains a faithful member of the party, to remain within ATT's government.

8.(C) Treta confirmed that the RPM will pursue its legal case seeking the dissolution of Mali's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which was originally formed without representation from the RPM (ref B). "We will not participate in the CENI," said Treta, "but we won't rest with our arms crossed either." Many have speculated that the RPM is planning on using the GOM's failure to incorporate RPM representatives into the CENI as grounds for contesting the election in the event of an IBK loss.

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Comment: Still a Two Man Race  
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9.(C) Soumeylou Boubey Maiga is well-known in Mali but lacks the political stature of IBK and ATT. His failure to win over the ADEMA leadership and thus run under the familiar ADEMA colors and bumble-bee logo (an important factor when considering Mali's many illiterate voters) presents Maiga with a serious handicap. He may draw enough attention and votes, however, to considerably shake up what was previously a rather straight-forward race between IBK and ATT. Maiga appears to be banking on the adage that "it is better to finish third than second" and position himself as a potential "king-maker" with enough votes to throw the election toward one man or another following the election's first round. In a recent conversation with the Embassy, Maiga did not rule out an eventual second round endorsement of ATT, despite his increasingly harsh criticisms of ATT's presidency. RPM leaders also indicated that while they regarded Maiga's candidacy as a positive development for IBK, there was no way to predict whom Maiga would support should he fail to progress beyond the first round. There are a number of other well-known political figures in Mali who have, up until this point, been content to remain on the sidelines of the 2007 election and position themselves instead for the campaign of 2012. Maiga's announcement may open the way for those who were hesitant to get mixed up in a battle between Mali's two

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political heavyweights to also enter the presidential race.  
McCulley